

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fifth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

Eliot Fisk, guitar
Complete *Cello Suites* of J. S. Bach
November 26 and 27, 3:00
West Building, West Garden Court

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Donal Fox, piano
Presented in honor of
Stuart Davis: In Full Swing
December 3, 12:30, 2:00, and 3:30
West Building, Gallery M78

—
Fox Wolf Duo
Virtuosos in Dialogue
December 4, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

—
Tempesta di Mare
Winter: A Cozy Noel
December 11, 4:00
West Building, West Garden Court

—
Danú
A Christmas Gathering: Féile Na Nollag
December 18, 2:00 and 4:00
West Building, West Garden Court

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

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Cover Ladislav Marcoussis, *Les Clefs des Songes* (The Key to Dreams) (detail), 1946, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the Estate of Moses and Ruth Helen Lasky, San Francisco, Harlan B. and Marshall R. Levine, Trustees

Back cover *West Building, Constitution Avenue entrance, viewed from Sixth Street NW, 1941, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gallery Archives*

75TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

NOVEMBER 20, 2016 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



PROGRAM

3:30 • West Building, West Garden Court

A Far Cry

David Krakauer, clarinet

Dreams and Prayers

Hildegard von Bingen (1098 – 1179)

O ignis spiritus paracliti

Oswaldo Golijov (b. 1960)

Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind

Prelude: Calmo, Sospeso

Agitato

Teneramente

Calmo, Sospeso

Postlude: Lento

Intermission

Mehmet Ali Sanlikol (b. 1974)

Vecd

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

“Heiliger Dankgesang,” from String Quartet no. 15, op. 132

The Musicians

A Far Cry

A Far Cry stands at the forefront of an exciting new generation in classical music. According to the *New York Times*, the self-conducted orchestra “brims with personality or, better, personalities, many and varied.” A Far Cry was founded in 2007 by a tightly knit collective of seventeen young professional musicians, and since the beginning has fostered those personalities. A Far Cry has developed an innovative process where decisions are made collectively and leadership rotates among the “Criers.” For each piece, the members elect a group of principals, and these five musicians guide the rehearsal process and shape the interpretation.

A Far Cry’s omnivorous approach has led the group to collaborations with artists such as Yo-Yo Ma, Jake Shimabukuro, Urbanity Dance, and Roomful of Teeth. By expanding the boundaries of orchestral repertoire and experimenting with the ways music is prepared, performed, and experienced, A Far Cry has been heard and embraced throughout the world through live performances and the Internet. In 2014, A Far Cry launched its in-house label, Crier Records, with the album *Dreams and Prayers*, which received a Grammy nomination. A second release, *Law of Mosaics*, followed that same year and has also garnered much critical attention, including many 2014 Top-10 lists, notably from *New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross. Also, WQXR’s Q2 Music named A Far Cry as one of the “Imagination-Grabbing, Trailblazing Artists of 2014.”

The eighteen Criers are proud to call Boston home, and maintain strong roots in the city, rehearsing at their storefront music center in Jamaica Plain and fulfilling the role of Chamber Orchestra in Residence at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Working with local students through an educational partnership with the New England Conservatory, A Far Cry aims to pass on the spirit of collaboratively empowered music to the next generation.

Violin

Annie Rabbat

Alex Fortes

Jae Cosmos Lee

Jesse Irons

Megumi Stohs Lewis

Miki-Sophia Cloud

Omar Chen Guey

Robyn Bollinger

Zenas Hsu

Viola

Dana Kelley

Jason Fisher

Molly Carr

Rimbo Wong

Cello

Alastair Eng

Karen Ouzounian

Loewi Lin

Bass

Erik Higgins

Kris Saebo

David Krakauer

Internationally acclaimed clarinetist David Krakauer redefines the notion of a concert artist. Known for his mastery of myriad styles, he occupies the unique position of being one of the world's leading exponents of Eastern European Jewish klezmer music, and at the same time is a major voice in classical music. He has appeared with the Tokyo, Kronos, and Emerson quartets, plus as soloist with the Dresden, Seattle, and Detroit symphony orchestras, among many others. With his band Ancestral Groove, he has redefined the klezmer genre with major appearances at Carnegie Hall and international venues. His discography contains some of the most important klezmer recordings of the past decade, notably *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*.

Krakauer has enjoyed major ongoing artistic collaborations with diverse performers and composers, including Dawn Upshaw, Itzhak Perlman, John Zorn, Fred Wesley, Music from Marlboro, Abraham Inc., Osvaldo Golijov, the Klezmatiks, John Cage, Danny Elfman, and Socalled. In his latest project, *The Big Picture*, he explores the universal search for identity through a reimagining of familiar themes by renowned film music composers brought together in a cinematic concert accompanied by original visuals. An avid educator, Krakauer has enjoyed a long relationship with Mannes (New School University), the Manhattan School of Music, NYU, and the Bard Conservatory.

Program Notes

O ignis spiritus paracliti

From the age of five, Hildegard von Bingen saw gloriously vivid visions, but it wasn't until the age of forty-three that she began documenting them, then channeling their ecstatic energy into music. By that time, Hildegard was abbess at the Benedictine monastery Disibodenberg, her physical and spiritual home from the age of eight, her family having dedicated her to the service of the church.

Monastic life builds a daily rhythm around the Divine Offices: services taking place at designated hours. Sequences (from the Latin, *sequentia*, "following") were elaborations of sacred texts. Originally, the last syllable of "Alleluia" was simply melodically prolonged, like a wordless ribbon extending, twisting, and trailing, in order to accompany lengthy processions. Eventually poetic text pertaining to the service was added with specific accompanying melodies, and sequences proliferated into the thousands. (Later this was trimmed down to a handful of approved sequences, one of which — the *Dies Irae* from the Requiem Mass — is well known to many classical concertgoers.)

What is striking about this sequence, and indeed all of Hildegard's music, is how elaborate it is in relation to most of the Gregorian chant being sung during her time — sheer artistic expression marrying form and function. Her music is often noted for its angular yet soaring lines crafted from breathless intervallic leaps. Her persistent, lifelong visions were often centered on earthly elements of fire, water, and wind, and the texts to her compositions are preoccupied with expressing the spiritual through nature imagery — particularly the Holy Spirit as represented by the blazing light of flames.

O ignis spiritus paracliti, written to honor the Holy Spirit, begins with the following text:

*O spirit of fire, bringer of comfort,
Life of the life of every creature,
You are holy, giving life to forms.
You are holy
anointing those perilously broken;
you are holy,
cleansing foul wounds.*

*O breath of holiness,
O fire of love,
O sweet savor in our breasts,
infusing hearts with the scent of virtue*

Program notes by Kathryn Bacasmot

Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind

Eight centuries ago, Isaac the Blind — the great kabbalist rabbi of Provence — dictated a manuscript in which he asserted that all things and events in the universe are products of combinations of the Hebrew alphabet's letters: "Their root is in a name, for the letters are like branches, which appear in the manner of flickering flames, mobile, and nevertheless linked to the coal."

Isaac's lifelong devotion to his art is as striking as that of string quartets and klezmer musicians. In these artists' search for something that arises from tangible elements but transcends them, they reach a state of communion. The movements of this work sound to me as if written in three of the different languages spoken by the Jewish people from the earliest times. This somehow reflects the composition's epic nature. I hear the prelude and the first movement, the most ancient, in Aramaic; the second movement is in Yiddish, the rich and fragile language of a long exile; the third movement and postlude are in sacred Hebrew.

The prelude and the first movement simultaneously explore two prayers in different ways: The quartet plays the first part of the central prayer of the High Holidays, "We will observe the mighty holiness of this day . . .," while the clarinet dreams the motifs from "Our Father, Our King." The second movement is based on "The Old Klezmer Band," a traditional dance tune, which is surrounded here by contrasting manifestations of its own halo. The third movement was written before all the others. It is an instrumental version of *K'Vakarat*, a work that I wrote a few years ago for Kronos and Cantor Misha Alexandrovich. The meaning of the word klezmer, "instrument of song," becomes clear when one hears David Krakauer's interpretation of the cantor's line. This movement, together with the postlude, bring to conclusion the prayer left open in the first movement: "Thou pass and record, count and visit, every living soul, appointing the measure of every creature's life and decreeing its destiny."

But blindness is as important in this work as dreaming and praying. I had always the intuition that, in order to achieve the highest possible intensity in a performance, musicians should play, metaphorically speaking, "blind." That is why, I think, all legendary bards in cultures around the world, starting with Homer, are said to be blind. "Blindness" is probably the secret of great string quartets, those who don't need their eyes to communicate among themselves, with the music or the audience. My homage to all of them and Isaac of Provence is this work for blind musicians, so they can play it by heart. Blindness, then, reminded me of how to compose music as it was in the beginning: an art that springs from and relies on our ability to sing and hear, with the power to build castles of sound in our memories. *Program notes by Osvaldo Golijov*

Vecd

Vecd (*wajd* in Arabic) refers to a state of rapture or ecstasy. In Islamic mysticism, Sufi dervishes would try to attain the state of *vecd* during their ceremonies in which music played a central role. Since *vecd* is the essence of Sufi ceremonies, in this composition I have tried to capture the essence of several different kinds of Turkish Sufi ceremonies. When doing this, I refrained from incorporating the sophisticated modal characteristics (or the so-called "microtones") of Turkish Sufi and Ottoman/Turkish classical music since this piece was being

composed for a Western string orchestra. Instead, I decided to base the composition on *zikir*, the practice of singing repeated rhythmic phrases by Sufi dervishes. Typically, Turkish Sufi ceremonies would feature one ostinato in a simpler meter and would speed this ostinato up throughout the course of five to ten minutes, if not more. During its speeding up, often a *hafiz* (Koranic chanter) would improvise on top of the ostinato using devotional poetry. In this composition, instead of using a single ostinato in a simple meter, I used multiple rhythmic cycles ranging from sixteen beats per measure to four beats per measure. The melodic phrases that develop throughout the piece replace improvisation, and these phrases together with the ostinati resemble another kind of Turkish Sufi ceremony: the Sema ceremony of the Mevlevi (whirling) dervishes. *Program notes by Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol*

"Heiliger Dankgesang," from String Quartet no. 15, op. 132

Beethoven's "Holy Song of Thanks by a Convalescent to the Divinity, in the Lydian Mode" (*Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart*) is the expansive middle movement of String Quartet no. 15, op. 132, completed in 1825 as part of the so-called *Galitzen Quartets* (including opuses 127 and 130), after their commissioner Prince Nikolas Galitzen. Proportionally, it is nearly the length of the first two movements combined and is twice as long as the two movements following. Structurally, it is divided into five distinct parts (perhaps a microcosmic reflection of the quartet's five movements), alternating three hymn-like "holy song of thanks" ("Heiliger Dankgesang") sections with the shimmering melodic lightness of two "feeling new strength" ("Neue Kraft fühlend") sections, forming a set of double variations as each repeats with increasing elaboration. Emotionally, the thanks expressed likely refers to Beethoven's recovery from an abdominal illness; perhaps, as Maynard Solomon suggests, also paying tribute to the healing powers of music on a beleaguered spirit. After all, in times of celebration or distress, we inevitably turn to music.

The "Heiliger Dankgesang" commences reverently in the old Lydian church mode, which, according to Renaissance music theorist Gioseffo Zarlino, "is a remedy for fatigue of the soul, and similarly for that of the body." The first iteration achieves a floating, otherworldly quality through gently consonant harmonies. Then, with three declamatory unisons that grasp the listener as if to say, "Pay special attention here!" the work shifts into D major for the first of the two "Neue Kraft fühlend" sections. Beethoven uses trills as a kind of asterisk noting an important shift, and here, the first violin trembles with the onset of joy. Each subsequent restatement of the "Heiliger Dankgesang" and "Neue Kraft fühlend" gains confidence, strength, and resolve: passion, via dissonance and resolution, infuses the "Heiliger Dankgesang," whilst the intervallic jumps and the violins' increasingly intricate interweaving instill the second "Neue Kraft fühlend" with enhanced exuberance. The work concludes with a pledge to go forward with conviction and purpose, buoyed by spiritual and physical renewal. *Program notes by Kathryn Bacasmot*